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National Task Force on Election Crises Raises Serious Concerns About Removal of EAC Commissioners; Reaffirms Confidence That States Can Administer Free and Fair Elections

On Thursday, July 9, the Trump administration removed the three remaining commissioners on the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), firing the two Democratic commissioners and accepting the resignation of a Republican commissioner (the fourth, Republican, commissioner retired voluntarily earlier this year). The bipartisan EAC was created in the wake of the contested 2000 presidential election to help channel federal funds and technical guidance to state and local election officials. Since then, it has provided limited but important support around core election administration issues.

These firings come after President Trump has tried to impose various election policies—including directing the EAC to adopt controversial policies on voter registration and election equipment—only to be blocked by multiple courts for overstepping his constitutional role.

The cross-partisan National Task Force on Election Crises issued the following statement in response:

“President Trump’s decision to abruptly terminate two EAC commissioners and accept the resignation of a third is a deeply concerning and unnecessary disruption during a high-stakes election cycle. It comes amid repeated efforts by President Trump to assert power over federal elections that have been rejected by the courts. Constitutional and statutory limits on the president’s authority over elections and the EAC must remain in place.

"The American people should know that these sudden removals, while unprecedented, do not prevent states from administering free and fair elections this year and beyond. The EAC does not directly participate in election administration and state and local election officials will continue to prepare for and carry out elections. The agency itself can continue to conduct routine grant administration and testing and certification of election equipment, although it cannot conduct official business or enact new policies without at least three Senate-confirmed commissioners. So these vacancies are harmful to the agency's full functioning but will not jeopardize core election administration.

"What would be far more damaging is any attempt by the Administration to bypass the constitutional and statutory guardrails that govern federal election policy or to pressure EAC staff to assume policymaking authority they do not possess. Decisions about federal election administration belong with Congress and the states, as the Constitution dictates."

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The National Task Force on Electoral Crises is composed of a diverse group of experts who share a commitment to the Task Force's mission. Task Force membership does not indicate an individual member's endorsement of every Task Force statement or action.